

DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL VISA NEWS

December 2008, Issue 4



As always, if you or someone else in your office or organization would like to be added to or removed from our electronic distribution list, please e-mail JordanRL@state.gov. We also welcome your feedback on this newsletter, as well as topics you would like to see addressed in future issues. Please note this issue is the last one for a few months due to the Chief's absence; the next issue will be in late April.



Holiday Processing Times Reminder

Please keep in mind that our busiest time of year has begun, especially if you are submitting applications for specific travel dates, which should be noted on the confirmation page. We are very unlikely to return cases within one to two days. Our standard processing time is 3-5 business days and administrative processing cases are taking an average of 4-8 weeks. Applications for services from immigration average 1-2 weeks, and may take longer during the holiday season, depending on the immigration officer's schedule. Given our below holiday closures and staffing, we cannot guarantee return before December 29 or 30 for any type of application received after December 19.

Upcoming Office Closures

Please note the below dates will not count toward our standard 3-5 business day turnaround because they are not business days. Of particular note is the four-day weekend in mid-January, in addition to the Christmas and New Year holidays. Whatever holidays you celebrate, we hope you enjoy them!

December 25, 2008 – Christmas
December 26, 2008 – federal holiday
January 1, 2009 – New Year's Day
January 19, 2009 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
January 20, 2009 – Presidential Inauguration
February 16, 2009 – Presidents' Day

Division Chief's Absence

Division Chief Carrie Muntean will be out of the office January through March, so please do not e-mail or phone her during that time. Instead, urgent cases should be communicated via fax to 202-663-1608 or e-mail to the relevant adjudicating officer (Deputy Hattie Tapley at tapleyhn@state.gov, Phyllis Zuraski at zuraskipl@state.gov, or USCIS liaison Catalina Chiarella at chiarellacd@state.gov).

Recent Errors to Avoid

Changing Order of Names – When completing the DS-1648, please use the same order of surnames and given names as listed in previous visa and passport, because all visas must be consistent. Not doing so can result in delays in visa renewal and problems at ports of entry.

Not Using All Names Listed in Passport – Please ensure all names listed in an applicant's passport are included on the I-94 and DS-1648, and that their Protocol registration matches. We are refusing a lot of renewal cases because they are registered with Protocol under only partial names.

Applying for New Visa Close to End of Tour of Duty – If an applicant has an I-94 for duration of status ("D/S"), his/her assignment is ending very soon, and (s)he does not plan to travel outside the U.S. and re-enter prior to the end of duty, then a new visa is not required to remain in the U.S., so please do not apply for one.

Leaving Mail at Desk – Please check your mail each week.

Phone Calls and Emergencies

Please respect our phone call hours of 2-4, and 11-12 at the reception desk, so we can spend the rest of our day processing your cases. Any calls outside those hours should be restricted to emergency situations only, which we define as life or death cases.

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http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1280.html